DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 378 762 EC 303 661

AUTHOR	Willis, Scott
TITLE	Making Schools More Inclusive: Teaching Children with Disabilities in Regular Classrooms.
INSTITUTION	Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, VA.
PUB DATE	Oct 94
NOTE	9p.; Broken type on pages 1 and 2.
AVAILABLE FROM	Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1250 N. Pitt St., Alexandria, VA 22314-1453 (Stock No. 1-94171, $1 each, prepaid, plus self-addressed stamped envelope; quantity discount available).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)
JOURNAL CIT	ASCD Curriculum Update; Oct 1994
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Disabilities; *Educational Change; Educational Methods; Elementary Secondary Education; *Inclusive Schools; Normalization (Disabilities); Social Integration; Special Education; Student Needs

ABSTRACT

This newsletter theme issue focuses on issues in including students with disabilities in regular education. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act calls for students to be placed in the least restrictive environment, which is presumed by some educators to be the regular classroom. The drawbacks of separate programs are not felt to be offset by clear benefits. Grouping children with like disabilities can be counterproductive; for example, grouping children with communication disabilities together results in poor role modeling for language. Education reformers emphasize that learning environments should be changed to allow these children to succeed. Some educators feel that inclusion bolsters disabled students' academic progress and offers socialization benefits, while nondisabled children learn to understand and accept children with disabilities. Other experts argue that special education provides help that is significantly different from general education. In addition, "full inclusion" means different things to different people; some educators want a continuum of placements, while others want a continuum of supports. Some educators are concerned about disabled children's need for specialized attention and life skills instruction. Regular teachers may not receive enough support to cope with diverse students. Suggestions for becoming more inclusive are offered to schools. Also included is a section, "Inclusion and the Disruptive Child." (JDD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 378 762

ASCD

CURRICULUM Update

October 1994

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
1250 N. Pitt Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-1453
(703) 549-9110

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

B. Brandt

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Making Schools More Inclusive

Teaching Children with Disabilities in Regular Classrooms

By Scott Willis

When teacher Nancy Brant was a college student, she visited her 10-year-old brother at his school. Because her brother had Down's syndrome, he was taught in the basement of the elementary school, Brant recalls, in a room "so hot you could hardly breathe." His teacher was kind but kept him busy doing simple tasks to help other children. "I don't think he was ever challenged," Brant says sadly. In time he was allowed to graduate, but he never took part in regular classes.

Susie Fitzhugh

Years later, memories of her brother's experiences spurred Brant to find a better solution for another child. As a 6th grade teacher at Miller Middle School in Marshalltown, Iowa, Brant willingly accepted a girl with Down's syndrome into her classroom. To make the placement work, Brant found ways to modify both instruction and assessment for the girl. She gave her simpler spelling words, for example, and tested her orally to circumvent her poor handwriting. With the girl's permission, Brant held an open discussion with the class about ways to include her, emphasizing how brave she was to face the challenges of a regular classroom. The other children in the class "included her fine," Brant reports with satisfaction.

The difference between the way Brant's brother and her student with Down's syndrome were taught reflects a new philosophy in how public schools should serve children with disabilities. Today, many educators believe these children should be included in regular classrooms far more than in the past, and that special education must become more integrated with general education.

Who are the children in special education? According to government statistics cited in *Winners All: A Call for Inclusive Schools*, a report published by the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) in 1992, nearly one-tenth of all U.S. students

EC 303661

aged 6–21 receive special education services. About one-half of those students have learning disabilities; one-quarter of them have speech or language impairments. The rest are mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, or have hearing, visual, orthopedic, or other health impairments. These include cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, autism, and Down's syndrome.

In the past, many students with disabilities have been taught in a separate setting for all or part of the school day. Advocates of more inclusive schooling, including organizations such as The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps (TASH), NASBE, and ASCD, are urging educators to try much harder to include these children in regular classrooms at their neighborhood schools. Rather than moving children to services, as in the past, educators should move services to the children, they say.

Beyond Access to Outcomes

In 1975, the U.S. Congress passed P.L. 94-142, a law that guaranteed all children, regardless of disability, a free and appropriate public education. At that time, many children with disabilities were excluded from public schooling—as many as one million, according to NASBE. The new law specified that these children were to be schooled in "the least restrictive environment," to the maximum extent appropriate. It also required that educators develop an individualized education plan (IEP) for each student in special education. As amended, this law is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

In response to the federal law, most states have created "categorical" programs that serve children based on their type of disability—and that tie funding to the number of children in each category, experts say. Because children with disabilities are so diverse, most school districts provide a "continuum" of services for them. At one end of the continuum—the least restrictive—are regular classrooms. The next option is resource rooms for part-day pullout programs. Next come self-contained classrooms; then separate schools for children with a particular disability, such as mental retardation or behavior disorders. At the other end of the continuum are residential schools (typically private), followed by institutions and hospitals.

Unfortunately, many states have not considered the regular classroom part of the special education continuum, says Virginia Roach, deputy executive director of NASBE. Many children with disabilities have been placed in separate buildings or isolated wings. Moreover, under existing funding provisions, many of these students would lose supports and services if they were placed in a regular classroom. Thus, funding creates a powerful incentive to keep a separate system to educate them.

To comply with the law, educators should *presume* a child with disabilities will be placed in the regular classroom—with supplementary aids and services if needed, reformers say. Yet, in many school districts, a child identified as having a particular disability is automatically assigned to a certain separate program, says Frank Laski, acting executive director of TASH. Rather than upholding "a strong preference and presumption for regular education," in many cases educators do not even consider that option, he says.

How have these rigid practices affected individual children? For many, they have meant long bus rides to a "center" for children who share the same disability, as well as the stigma of being labeled and treated differently from other children, and isolation from the life of their neighborhood.

When Tiffany Robson, who has multiple disabilities due to a rare chromosome abnormality, was in kindergarten, she did not attend her neighborhood school in Port Coquitlam, British Columbia. Instead, she rode a bus one hour each way to a special program. Because her school was so distant, her mother, Karen Robson, could not meet with Tiffany's teachers as often as she wished. Perhaps most distressing, Tiffany did not have a chance to form friendships, as she lived far from her schoolmates and was away from her own neighborhood from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Karen Robson attests to "the stigma attached to the bus that picks up all the kids with challenges." The bus was a constant reminder that her child—and her family—were different, she says.

Unfortunately, the drawbacks of separate programs are not offset by clear benefits. Reformers emphasize that these programs cannot be justified by their educational outcomes, which have been poor. According to Roach, special education has too often consisted of watered-down skill-and-drill instruction, only loosely related (if at all) to students' IEPs, using the same instructional methodology as in regular education. The dropout rate has been twice that of regular education, and post-school outcomes have been grim.

Special education has done a good job in providing access to many children who hadn't been schooled before—those with cerebral palsy, for example, says Lynn Malarz, director of professional development for the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). But special education has not done well by students with mild to moderate disabilities, she says. As adults, these students have low rates of employment (usually in menial jobs) and high rates of drug addiction and criminality. "It's taken us 20 years to gather those statistics," Malarz says, and the picture they paint is bleak. "What we thought was going to produce a better quality of life [for these students] sometimes hasn't even kept the kids in school."

Special education is dysfunctional, overgrown, and "incredibly bureaucratic," says Joy Rogers, a professor of counseling and educational psychology at Loyola University. Too often, children in pullout programs fall farther and farther behind, while missing instruction in the regular class. "In some cases, what they miss is more important than what they get," Rogers says.

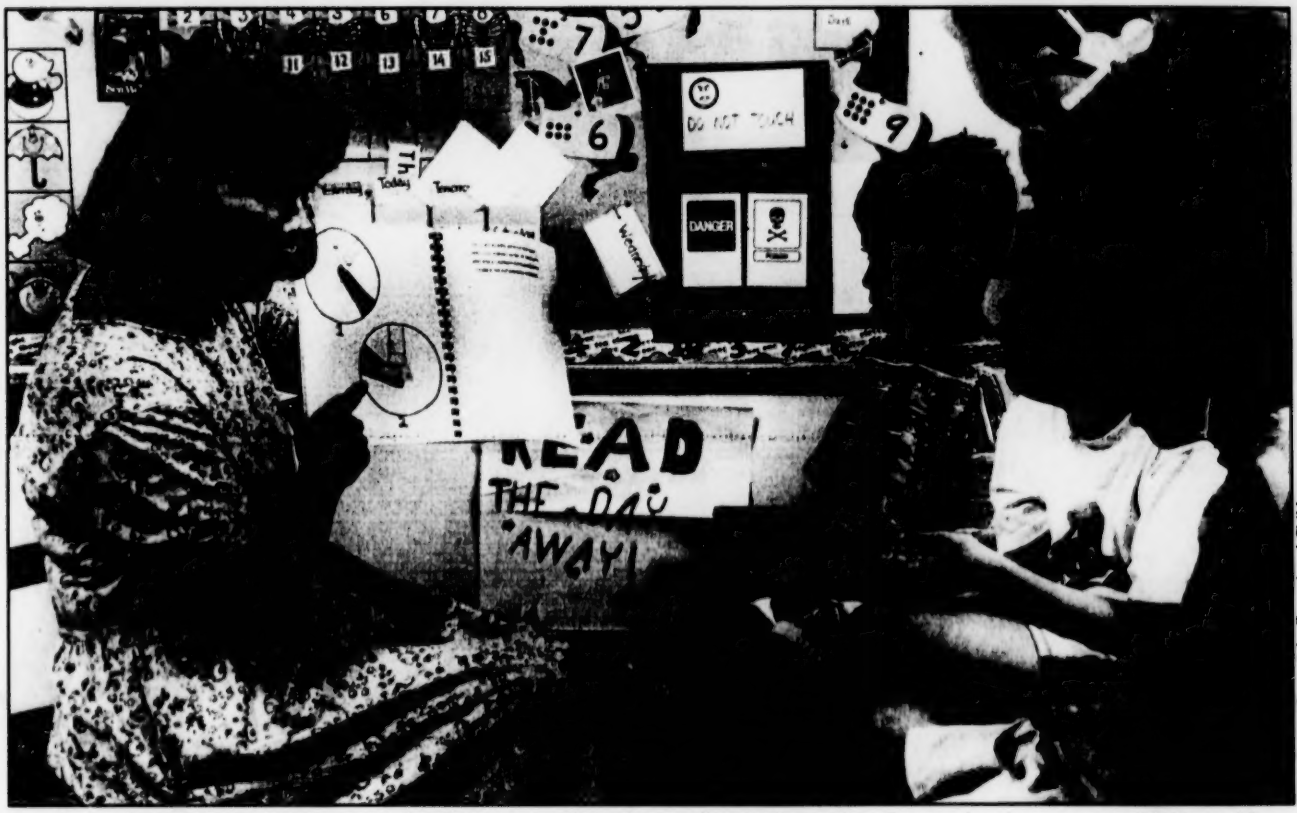
Furthermore, grouping children with like disabilities can be counterproductive, many experts point out. When children with communication disabilities, for example, are grouped together, "the role modeling for language is extremely poor," Malarz says. Similarly, children with behavior problems learn from each other ways to *mis*behave.

Special education has also been criticized for placing more emphasis on complying with the law than on ensuring good outcomes for students, says Doug Fuchs, a professor of special education at Vanderbilt University. According to critics, federal and state officials have failed to encourage a quality-driven system. "Federal monitors would swoop down on a school district and demand to see students' IEPs," Fuchs says, "and if they were up to date, the district was deemed okay." Regulators didn't inquire into students' progress—or lack thereof.

Fragmented categorical programs have not been very helpful, according to Margaret Wang, director of Temple University's Center for Research in Human Development and Education. In large urban schools, more than half of the children may receive pullout services, Wang says, turning classrooms into "Grand Central Station" and teachers into dispatchers. The basic problem, she asserts, is that educators have focused on what's wrong with the children. Instead, they should change the learning environment to allow these children to succeed.

A Better Environment

In what ways does inclusive schooling provide a better environment for children with disabilities? Inclusion benefits these children both academically and socially, advocates argue. The regular classroom environment bolsters their academic progress, because they are held to higher expectations, exposed to more challenging content, and inspired by the example of their nondisabled peers. They benefit socially because they can see models of appropriate social behavior and make friends with children from their own neighborhoods.



Mark Regen/Council for Exceptional Children

In self-contained classrooms, children with disabilities receive intensive, small-group instruction. Can regular classrooms provide them with the same degree of support? Experts disagree.

Benefits of this kind have been demonstrated in the case of Tiffany Robson, who is now a 4th grader at Kilmer Elementary School in Port Coquitlam, B.C., an inclusive school. Although Tiffany has multiple disabilities, including vision and hearing impairments, she is fully included in a regular classroom, assisted by a full-time aide. She studies modified lessons that parallel what the other students are learning. Tiffany is making satisfactory academic progress, her mother, Karen Robson, says, and she now has many friends.

Karen Robson "can't express enough" the advantages of being able to walk Tiffany to school—where she sees other children welcoming and helping her daughter—and being able to talk daily with Tiffany's teacher and aide. She now has a sense of belonging to the community, she says.

An increasing number of schools are finding inclusion of this sort feasible, experts say. Moreover, recent federal court decisions have sided with parents who want their disabled children taught at the neighborhood school, leaving schools that are not inclusive vulnerable to legal challenges.

"Our feeling is that for children with disabilities, more often than not, the continuum of services has been weighted toward segregated, self-contained settings," says Theresa Rebhorn of the Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) in Alexandria, Va. Inclusion "tries to help balance the continuum more." When students with disabilities are placed in regular classrooms, they benefit from better modeling of learning, behavior, and language, Rebhorn says.

Many inclusion advocates emphasize that higher expectations prevail in regular classrooms. In special education, the "normal baseline" has become more and more remote, says Roach, because teachers are "so far removed from what normal development is." For example, 4th graders may still have nap time.

"A lot more learning goes on in a regular classroom," Rebhorn states bluntly. In special education, a teacher's focus becomes "very, very myopic," she says. To make her point, she describes a visit she made to the center where her local school district proposed placing her daughter, who has severe disabilities. Although the center had a good teacher-to-student ratio, Rebhorn "didn't see a lot of education going on." One 6th grade class of three students was deep in a lesson on the difference between messy and neat—although the students had physical, not mental, disabilities.

Upholding high expectations is a must, because educators initially have very little idea of what a disabled child can achieve, says Douglas Biklen, a professor of special education at Syracuse University and author of *Schooling without Labels: Parents, Educators, and Inclusive Education*. Some educators feel confident stating limits, Biklen says, but he believes that doing so is irresponsible. Over the years, there has been "a dramatic transformation" in expectations for the disabled *and* in their performance, he says.

Inclusion also brings benefits for nondisabled students, advocates claim. By interacting with their disabled peers, nondisabled children become more tolerant and learn to appreciate human differences. In inclusive classrooms, nondisabled children may also benefit from instruction that is more individualized and from increased staffing. "An aide doesn't just 'velcro' herself to the child with a disability," Roach points out; "she's there to support the entire class."

Through inclusion, nondisabled children learn to "understand and accept children with disabilities," Rebhorn says. Rather than feeling overwhelmed when they

Susie Fitzhugh

Children with disabilities often surprise their teachers when they are given opportunities to demonstrate their skills, advocates of inclusion maintain.

encounter these children, they come to see how disabled children are "more like them than not like them," she says. This happens because their disabled peers "aren't visitors; they're part of the class, and they share that common identity."

Regardless of how they feel about inclusion, however, many regular classroom teachers feel ill-equipped to teach children with disabilities. After all, they are not certified in special education. Yet, some experts say, special education teachers do not draw on a separate knowledge base.

According to Wang, strategies for teaching children with disabilities do not "tie to labels." In other words, no scientific data suggest that one should teach students with learning disabilities differently from those in Chapter 1 programs, for example. "Good instruction is good instruction," Wang says. Children who are not doing well in school need *intensive* instruction—a different amount, not kind, of help. The belief that special educators draw upon "some kind of mysterious knowledge base" is "a misconception we have created in 20 years of special ed," Wang says.

Other experts, however, say special education teachers provide help that is significantly different. Teachers in general education and special education may use many of the same strategies, says Ellen Schiller of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs. A good special education teacher, however, will provide instruction that differs markedly in its explicitness and pacing, in the way it scaffolds the curriculum, and in its degree of corrective feedback and reinforcement. "The intensity is much different than what general education kids would get," Schiller says.

Special education hasn't used the knowledge at its disposal—the scores of strategies developed over time by researchers and teachers in the field, says Fuchs. This failure has stemmed, in part, from lack of leadership to underscore that special education is there to *teach* these children, to shore up their skills. Thus, to curtail special education based on its record would be "somewhat precipitous and premature," Fuchs says. It *can* do a good job.

Does Full Inclusion Go Too Far?

While most educators agree that schools should become more inclusive, controversy rages around the notion of "full inclusion" of children with disabilities. According to Fuchs, advocates for children with severe mental retardation typically support full inclusion, because they are more concerned with socialization than with academic progress. Advocates for children who are learning disabled, blind, or deaf tend to be staunchly opposed.

Muddying the debate, "full inclusion" appears to mean different things to different people. To some, it means full compliance with the IDEA; if this goal were achieved, "we would see almost all [disabled] children participating in the regular classroom to a much greater extent than they now do," says Laski. For others, "full inclusion" means placing literally every child in the regular classroom full-time.

Biklen, who describes himself as an advocate of full inclusion, would like schools to provide "a range of options that are always integrated." Speech therapy, for example, can be provided in the regular classroom (rather than in a pullout setting) if the teacher consults with an expert and uses "integrative therapies," he says. In light of the goal of such therapy—to help students communicate better in the classroom—such an approach makes sense, Biklen believes. But he doesn't think educators should be "so doctrinaire as

not to allow a kid to see a specialist now and then."

Some full inclusionists, however, want to scrap the continuum of services entirely. As long as placement options other than the regular classroom exist, educators won't have to restructure general education to accommodate all children, says Mara Sapon-Shevin, a professor of education at Syracuse University. The continuum provides a "default option," she says: children who challenge the system are simply removed from it, so the system itself doesn't have to change.

"We need a continuum of *supports*," not of placements, Sapon-Shevin asserts. "Everybody gets in the pool, whether or not they can swim," she says. "But some kids stay in the shallow end; some have a flotation device; some have a raft."

The belief that certain children can't be included in the regular classroom is based on a false assumption of lockstep instruction, Sapon-Shevin says. But by using strategies such as "multi-level" instruction, learning centers, and cooperative learning, teachers can accommodate all students.

Not surprisingly, the notion of scrapping the continuum of placements disturbs many in the special education community. The Council for Exceptional Children, for example, "believes that a continuum of services must be available for all children," although it supports inclusion "whenever possible," according to a policy statement.

One expert who disagrees vehemently

Inclusion and the Disruptive Child

Even some educators who support inclusion have reservations about including children who are so disruptive they detract from the education received by the rest of the class. According to NASBE, about 9 percent of children in special education have serious emotional disturbances. Deciding how to serve these children poses a challenge for inclusive schools.

James H. Boyd Elementary School in Huntington, N.Y., has had "excellent success" with including students who are physically disabled, learning disabled, blind, and hearing impaired, says Principal Allan Vann. But students who are emotionally disturbed—and disruptive—have been more problematic, requiring "tough balancing acts" between the rights of the individual and the rights of the group. If a child throws a book or shouts an obscenity, the teacher must struggle to restore a positive atmosphere, and the "teachable moment" may be lost forever, Vann says. Some children who are less severely emotionally disturbed can be mainstreamed for one or two subjects—math or science, for example—but they can't handle a regular classroom for six hours, Vann says.

"Clearly, some students don't belong in regular classes," because teachers don't have the wherewithal to provide for them, and they cause problems for other students, says Peter Idstein of Wilmington College. Idstein has written about his difficulties, in his former role as an elementary principal, in trying to move a child from the regular classroom to a more restrictive placement. The child in question would scream, throw furniture, talk to himself, hit other children and lick their faces.

"Nobody seems to care very much about the other kids in the classroom," Idstein says. "There are kids on the receiving end of these behaviors." Federal law is focused on the rights of children with special needs, he notes, and there is no formal balancing of competing concerns. "Nondisabled kids stand without advocates," he says.

Concerns about disruptive children are valid, says Theresa Rebhorn of PEATC, but there are steps educators can take to include these students successfully. For example, they can develop a behavior management plan that all staff members participate in; provide an aide for the child who gradually "fades" over time as the child's behavior improves; find a peer buddy; or allow the child to take "time out" when necessary—to sit quietly or talk with a counselor. Children who are disruptive can also benefit from seeing appropriate behavior in the regular classroom, Rebhorn says.

Not everyone agrees that good behavior is contagious, however. Inclusion advocates overstate the positive effects of role modeling on disabled children, says Jim Kauffman of the University of Virginia. Many of these children don't have the subskills they need to benefit from modeling, he argues: they don't retain what they have observed, don't know when to produce the behavior, and aren't motivated to do so. And children are often attracted to bad role models, he adds: overly aggressive children gravitate toward aggressive models, for example.

Maintaining Options

Shutting down the more restrictive options for disruptive children would be doing them "a terrible disservice," says Jo Webber, president of the Council for Children with Behavior Disorders (CCBD).

Webber's organization represents children who are emotionally disturbed or who have disorders of conduct, attention, or personality—children who tend to "act out" and are prone to violence. These children are often taught in resource rooms, sometimes with some mainstreaming. The "tougher kids" are placed in self-contained classrooms, separate schools, or psychiatric hospitals. Children with behavior disorders are "hard to tolerate in the regular classroom," Webber says. If they are placed there, "that's going to last a week or two, until somebody gets hurt," she predicts.

The CCBD supports a full continuum of services, Webber says. "Our kids have failed in general education already," and "dumping them back in is one of the worst things that could be done." As for providing these students the support they need to function in a regular classroom, Webber says, "I'm not sure what that support would be." The presence of a full-time aide would probably embarrass them and "set them off," she says. Most of these children need a therapeutic setting, which is typically segregated.

Webber is worried that including these children may backfire. If there is too much inclusion of disruptive children, "general education will blow a gasket," she fears, and, in the backlash, these children will be put in even more segregated settings than at present.

Inclusion of disruptive students is "potentially a real issue," says Douglas Biklen of Syracuse University. But "saying you believe in inclusive education is like saying we should stamp out racism," he maintains: it doesn't mean you can accomplish the goal overnight or know all the ways to root out problems. Rather, it's a statement of one's ideals. The difficulty of attaining those ideals "doesn't lessen the importance of staking out your educational philosophy," he asserts. ■

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Mark Regan/Council for Exceptional Children

In inclusive settings, teachers are more likely to focus on students' capabilities, rather than their limitations, many experts believe.

with full inclusion is Jim Kauffman, a professor of education at the University of Virginia and co-editor of the book *The Illusion of Full Inclusion*. Unlike the "full inclusion extremists," Kauffman believes schools should include only those disabled students "for whom it's appropriate."

Kauffman has many concerns about overzealous inclusion efforts. First, he believes it is impossible to give *all* children a truly appropriate education in neighborhood schools and regular classrooms. Many children with emotional and behavior disorders need "a much more structured, predictable environment than you can possibly arrange in a neighborhood school," he says. Similarly, children with severe disabilities may need a school organized to serve their needs for physical therapy and training in life skills. Some advocates have gotten "carried away" thinking that regular classrooms could be made truly appropriate for all students, Kauffman says. "The rhetoric has gotten ahead of our knowledge."

Second, moves toward full inclusion limit the choices of parents of disabled children, Kauffman says. If the continuum of placements is curtailed or abandoned, then "parent options are severely restricted." Third, the inclusion movement puts primary emphasis on place, as if there were something magical about it, he says. Special education needs to transform the instruction it offers, not *where* it's offered. "It's what goes on there that's important."

Kauffman is also concerned that some districts may be moving toward full inclusion as a way to save money through reducing expensive special education services. Yet to provide truly appropriate education, inclusion will cost far more, he asserts: More teachers will be needed to provide the same intensity of instruction when disabled students are dispersed throughout the school or region. Given the current fiscal situation in many districts, it is probably not feasible to do inclusion right, he believes. (Other experts, however, claim that inclusion would yield substantial savings in busing and building maintenance costs, which could be reallocated for staff and support services.)

Other Concerns

Kauffman is not alone in his concerns. Skeptics cite other potential dangers of inclusion: Disabled children may not get enough specialized attention in regular classrooms, and they may miss out on instruction in life skills. Nondisabled children may get less attention from the teacher, and the pace of their instruction might be slowed down. Regular classroom teachers may not be given enough support to cope with the diversity of students and the demands of those with special needs.

This last concern, in particular, has prompted the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) to call for a moratorium on full inclusion policies, urging that policymakers put more time and thought into balancing the needs of special education and general education students.

The AFT's concerns are not based on prejudice, says Beth Bader, a policy analyst for the union. Instead, they stem from calls the AFT has received from teachers and parents across the United States, who tell of districts moving to inclusion precipitously, without adequate planning, and misleading teachers about the support they will receive.

The AFT has "no problem" with each child's right to a free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment, Bader says. However, the union has "a big problem" with full inclusion. Even with supports and services, not all children with disabilities can be integrated into the regular classroom, Bader says. The AFT wants to preserve a continuum of placements, to ensure the best education for *all* children.

Students who are severely emotionally disturbed or medically fragile, for example, may require tremendous amounts of attention—and may even pose a danger to others, Bader says. Would their presence in a regular classroom be fair to other children? The AFT also has concerns about unreasonable demands on teachers to perform medical procedures, such as inserting a feeding tube or catheter.

Advocates for students with learning disabilities also object to full inclusion. Children considered learning disabled (LD) are a heterogeneous group, says Justine Maloney, legislative chair for the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA). Most LD children are of average intelligence, yet many have great difficulty learning to read, while others have "no sense of math." Many have a very short memory; they are often disorganized; and some are hyperactive or easily frustrated. According to the LDA, in 1990–91 more than two million children in U.S. public schools were identified as having learning disabilities—more than half of all students considered disabled.

According to the LDA's official position statement on inclusion, "the regular education classroom is not the appropriate placement for a number of students with learning disabilities who may need alternative instructional environments, teaching strategies, and/or materials that cannot or will not be provided within the context of a regular classroom placement."

"There will always be some students who aren't able to survive and grow in the regular classroom," says Ann Kornblet, LDA's president. A regular class of 25 to 30 students may not be a good setting for a child who has difficulty processing information, Kornblet says. The surroundings would simply be too distracting.

Yet schools and districts are moving LD students into regular classrooms, Maloney says—all the more readily because these children are seen as only mildly disabled and therefore the "easiest to move." Maloney finds such thinking dangerously flawed. "If somebody can't swim, it doesn't matter if they're 5 feet or 50 feet from the shore," she says. "If they don't get the help they need, they're going to drown."

Naomi Zigmond, a professor of education at the University of Pittsburgh, has studied the inclusion of students with learning disabilities in regular classes. She considers them "the hardest students to do good full inclusion with."

One of Zigmond's studies examined four elementary schools in Pennsylvania that moved LD students into regular classrooms full-time. (These students had formerly been taught in self-contained classrooms and resource rooms.) On the surface, all went well. Teachers adjusted to the change, and "everybody was happy." However, "for students with learning disabilities, this was not a better arrangement in terms of academic achievement," Zigmond found. Educating these students in the regular classroom yielded academic results "just as disappointing" as those produced by their previous placements.

Another study examined five elementary schools implementing full inclusion for LD students (with in-class support). This study found that LD students received extra help, but they seldom got the kind of "relentless, intensive" instruction they needed to make real progress.

On the basis of her research, Zigmond believes that inclusion is "much harder than we think it is, if the goal is academic progress." The challenge, she believes, is to find ways to provide both inclusive education and the intensive remedial instruction LD students need.

The deaf community also has been outspoken against full inclusion policies, vigorously defending the maintenance of separate schools for the deaf. Because deaf children communicate by sign language, the regular classroom is an "unfriendly environment" for them, both pedagogically and socially, says Oscar Cohen, executive director of the Lexington School for the Deaf in Jackson Heights, N.Y.

Cohen bristles at the assertion made by some inclusion advocates that providing an interpreter for a deaf child "evens the playing field." Because the student still can't communicate with classmates or the teacher, and does not have full access to the school community, such an approach "shortchanges" the deaf child, he says.

No research exists that shows inclusion is effective for deaf children, Cohen says. But he believes it ought to be an option. In exceptional cases, some deaf children go to regular schools, he says—to take AP courses, for example. If they come from a supportive family, they can deal with the isolation. However, inclusion *won't* work for many deaf children, he emphasizes.

Full inclusion advocates are like zealots, Cohen says. "This idea of one-size-fits-all is either misguided idealism or cost cutting," he believes. Advocates for the deaf community will keep placement options open only with a fight—"and we're fighting," he says.

Making It Work in Practice

If a school or district decides to make greater inclusion of students with disabilities a goal, what does it take to meet these students' needs in regular classrooms? First and foremost, general and special education teachers must work much more closely together than in the past, experts say. In many cases, special education teachers act as consultants to regular classroom teachers, or co-teach classes with them that include children with disabilities.

At Miller Middle School in Marshalltown, Iowa, co-teaching is the norm, explains Principal Brad Clement. The impetus for change came when educators at the school realized they couldn't meet all students' needs through pullout programs. "We had more kids with needs than we could serve that way," Clement says. (The school still provides a separate program for the most profoundly disabled children, and pullout programs for children with skill deficits.)

When the idea of co-teaching was first proposed, Clement was surprised at the number of teachers willing to try it. Teachers were surveyed about what subjects and grades they would like to co-teach, and with whom they were willing to work. The collaboration between regular education and special education teachers has allowed a professional dialogue that wasn't possible when they were segregated, Clement says.

Co-teaching is "very, very positive," says Linda Stephens, who teaches at Miller. Students think they're "lucky" to have two teachers, she says, and the stigma of receiving special help has been removed. Moreover, she believes disabled children are getting more attention, feedback, and monitoring than before. The teachers also benefit: they can share strategies and quickly head off misbehavior.

Children with disabilities "feel much more a part of the class," Stephens says. They also benefit from hearing class discussion. Expectations for them are high (even if modified). And these students come to realize they can hold their own—when a nondisabled peer says, "I agree with what Linda said," for example.

Students with disabilities are now getting much more assistance with their regular classwork, says Sue Merryman, a special education teacher at Miller who co-teaches five classes. "The kids don't even know they're in special ed anymore," she reports. Moreover, co-teaching allows special education teachers to have a wider impact, Merryman says. While she used to work with only about 20 students daily, she now interacts with more than 150, giving the district more for its money.

Parents have been very accepting of the co-teaching arrangement, teachers at Miller say. In fact, most parents of Miller students *want* co-taught classes for their children, because those classes have more adult support. And a recent survey showed that 80 percent of students prefer them, Merryman says.

Modifying the Curriculum

For many disabled children, teachers must modify the curriculum to suit their needs and abilities. Modifying the curriculum requires "a real shift in the teacher's mindset," says Sarah Husband, who teaches at Kilmer Elementary School in Port Coquitlam, B.C. Teachers are so driven by the curriculum, she says, that they are stymied if it isn't relevant for a particular child.

For students with disabilities, teachers typically provide a "parallel curriculum"—lessons related to what the other students are learning but pitched at a simpler level. For example, in an 8th grade science class studying mitosis, a disabled child might be drawing cells. Or, in a math class, if other students are learning the concept of scale, a disabled child might be doing simple measuring.

Teachers can also have children with disabilities do part of an instructional task, says Biklen. They might be able to "keep up" with some aspects of the regular lesson. Educators are frequently surprised at the skills these students can demonstrate if given the opportunity, he says. "The stereotyped image of a child slumped over a table, unable to communicate, getting nothing out of a calculus class is *not* what we're talking about," he emphasizes.

In general, teachers should use a variety of instructional styles and media, Biklen says. "The strategies needed to make inclusion work are those historically associated with good schooling," he asserts, including experiential learning, group work, projects, and the teaching of inquiry skills. Inclusive

classrooms are the most exciting, he says.

In teaching to the middle, teachers have always known they're losing kids, says Sapon-Shevin. Instead, teachers need to provide instruction that accommodates students at all ability levels. If teachers design a rich set of activities around a topic, they shouldn't have trouble selecting which are appropriate for different learners, whether they're gifted, ESL, or have cerebral palsy, she says.

Inclusive instruction is hands-on, participatory, active, and cooperative, Sapon-Shevin says. Innovations such as whole language, authentic assessment, and critical thinking are "part and parcel of inclusion," she asserts.

Many teachers use cooperative learning as a vehicle to include children with disabilities. "You really can't do inclusion in a competitive classroom," Sapon-Shevin says. Inclusion has been successful in the Winooski, Vt., schools, in large measure because teachers use cooperative learning, and because nondisabled students have been trained as peer tutors, says Richard Villa, an education consultant from Colchester, Vt. Nondisabled students also act as advocates for their disabled peers, helping to plan accommodations for them, he says.

Teachers can also integrate instruction in life skills, Villa says. In many segregated programs, disabled students don't really *learn* life skills because they don't practice them in a real context, he says. Through inclusion, students can really do practical tasks, such as counting milk money or working in the cafeteria.

Of course, teachers must also modify assessment for some students with disabilities. Common modifications include giving oral tests, multiple-choice tests, or a limited number of problems, experts say.

Where to Begin

How can a school or district best become more inclusive? Start a working group, Sapon-Shevin suggests—one that includes teachers from both regular education and special education, administrators, parents, and some students. Read the literature on inclusion and visit schools that are inclusive, she advises.

From many interviews with teachers and administrators, Roach has learned that teachers do not find pre-training that poses "what if" scenarios to be helpful. What they *do* find helpful is to see an inclusive classroom in action. "Teachers say, 'Until the kids are in the classroom, you don't know what you're dealing with,'" Roach reports. After the children are there, teachers need time to brainstorm solutions to any problems.

The national debate about inclusion is a sign of changing attitudes.

Administrators need to provide teachers with planning time and with opportunities to learn new teaching strategies, such as cooperative learning and peer coaching, Roach says. And administrators themselves need training. Her interviews have revealed that it's the building principal who "makes it or breaks it," she says.

Mike Snow, principal of Copeland Manor, an elementary school in Libertyville, Ill., offers advice for other principals. "You've got to get the teachers accepting of the idea," he says, by providing them with literature and workshops about inclusion, and opportunities to visit those who practice it. And principals must *show* their support, he says, by going into classrooms, working with the children, and handling discipline problems. "Teachers really try," Snow says, "but there's a lot of frustration." When problems arise, principals must help teachers brainstorm solutions and put them into practice.

Those with experience in moving to inclusion "unanimously" advise others not to move too fast, Roach says. She suggests starting pilot programs in a couple of schools, or beginning with kindergarten and "bumping up" the program year by year.

The Way of the Future?

Many advocates are hopeful that inclusion will become more widespread. Roach hears more and more about districts moving toward inclusion, and some states are revamping their funding formulas to make them "placement neutral," she says. Pennsylvania, for example, now reimburses school districts for a fixed percentage of their students—providing no financial incentive to label and segregate children.

The national debate about inclusion is an indication of changing attitudes, Biklen says. He is "extremely optimistic" that pressure for inclusion will continue to mount, as educators develop models of what's possible and expectations are raised. As eyes are opened, there will be "no turning back," he says.

Whether inclusion will be the way of the future is "yet to be seen," says Malarz. At present, inclusion is practiced only in scattered places, she notes, and it is "not a given" that inclusion will become more widespread. In places where it starts and isn't successful, people will pull back, she predicts.

Malarz's hope is that special education will become more integrated with general education. Too often, the attitude of regular classroom teachers has been: "Those are *your* kids." All educators need to realize "it's *our* kid—it's the school's child," she says. That change would be "a big step." ■

John O'Neil, Editor
Scott Willis, Staff Writer

Forging Covenants in Teaching and Learning for the Success of All Learners

ASCD CURRICULUM Update

Gene Carter, *Executive Director*
Ron Brandt, *Executive Editor*
Nancy Modrak, *Manager, Editorial Services*
Biz McMahon, *Assistant Editor*
Stephanie Justen, *Asst. Manager, Production Services*
Gary Bloom, *Manager, Design and Production Services*
Karen Monaco, *Senior Graphic Designer*

ASCD Curriculum Update is published four times per year as a supplement to *ASCD Update*, the official newsletter of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1250 N. Pitt St., Alexandria, VA 22314-1453. Telephone: 703/549-9110 (switchboard hours are 8 to 5, Monday through Friday, Eastern Time). Copyright 1994.

ASCD Curriculum Update reports trends, research findings, exemplary programs, and available resources in a specific curriculum area.

Reprint Policy: Educators are permitted to reproduce a single article from *ASCD Update* without requesting permission from ASCD, provided that the duplication is for an educational purpose by a nonprofit institution, that copies are made available without charge beyond the cost of reproduction, and that each copy includes a full citation of the source. Other requests will be handled on a case-by-case basis by writing to the above address. Those requesting permission to reprint entire issues of *ASCD Update* or *ASCD Curriculum Update* are ordinarily requested to purchase bulk quantities according to the price rate provided in each publication.

Subscriptions to this publication are included in ASCD membership, but additional copies may be ordered (prepaid only) at the following rates:

1 copy	$1.00 and SASE
10 copies	$12.50
25 copies	$20.00
50 copies	$30.00
100 copies	$50.00

When ordering, please cite stock no. 1-94171